

REMARKS

This reply should place the present application in condition for allowance.

Applicants have amended claim 13 to include all of the recitations of former dependent claim 15, canceled claim 15, and amended claim 16 so that it is dependent from claim 13. Claims 1-14 and 16-38 are pending in this application.

In the final Office Action dated May 4, 2006, the Examiner indicated that claims 1-12 and 17-37 are allowed and that claims 15 and 16 would be allowable if these claims would be amended to place them in independent form. Applicants greatly appreciate the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter. By the amendment of claim 13, former dependent claim 15 has been rewritten in independent form. Since each of the independent claims pending in the present application (i.e., claims 1, 13, 17, and 25) is allowable, all of the pending claims should be allowable.

In the final Office Action dated May 4, 2006, claims 13, 14, and 38 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) based on U.S. Patent No. 6,135,073 to Feucht in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,611,304 to Shinojima. Applicants respectfully disagree with the claim rejection because there is no *prima facie* case of obviousness for several different reasons. Notwithstanding Applicants' disagreement with the claim rejection, the remaining independent claim rejected under Section 103(a) (i.e., claim 13) has been amended to incorporate subject matter indicated as being allowable, thereby obviating the claim rejection and placing these claims in condition for allowance. Further, given that claims 14, 16, and 38 depend from claim 13, these claims should be allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 13.

For at least reasons set forth above, the present application should be in condition for allowance.

Conclusion

Applicant respectfully requests that this Amendment under 37 C.F.R. §1.116 be entered by the Examiner, placing claims 1-14 and 16-38 in condition for allowance.

Applicants submit that the proposed amendment of claim 13 does not raise new issues or necessitate the undertaking of any additional search of the art by the Examiner, since all of the elements and their relationships claimed were claimed earlier. Therefore, this Amendment should allow for immediate action by the Examiner.

Furthermore, Applicants submit that entry of this Amendment would place the application in better form for appeal, should the Examiner dispute the patentability of the pending claims.

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the application, entry of this Amendment, and timely allowance of the pending claims.

The Office Action contains characterizations of the claims and the related art with which Applicants do not necessarily agree. Unless expressly noted otherwise, Applicants decline to subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.

The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (202) 408-4393 if the Examiner deems that a telephone conversation would further the prosecution of the application.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

FINNEGAN, HENDERSON, FARABOW,
GARRETT & DUNNER, L.L.P.

Dated: August 30, 2006

By: 

Meredith N. Schoenfeld
Reg. No. 52,418